

U.S. Army Chief of Chemical and CBRN School Commandant Pins on General Officer Star

By Mr. Luke Waack

The U.S. Army Chief of Chemical and Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) School Commandant was promoted during a ceremony held at the U.S. Army Maneuver Support Center, Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, 3 September 2009. Colonel Leslie Smith was promoted to brigadier general in the presence of several hundred Soldiers, family members, and friends. Lieutenant General Dennis Via, director of the Command, Control, Communications, and Computer Systems Directorate (J-6), Joint Staff, presided over the ceremony. "I first met then Captain 'Les' Smith eighteen years ago, when we served together in the 82d Airborne Division. Those were some very tough and challenging days, but also some of our very best days. We knew then that there was something special about this chemical officer named Captain Smith," Via said.

Following Via's remarks, Smith's wife, Venedra, pinned the star on the new brigadier general's chest. Brigadier General Smith then spoke about people who had influenced him in positive ways throughout his life and career. "As I wear this star, I carry the leaders, NCOs [noncommissioned officers] and Soldiers, community, friends, and family with me daily," Smith said.

According to Brigadier General Smith, "Jackie Robinson once said, 'Your life is not important, except for the impact it may have on other lives.'" Smith explained that the five points of the general officer's star represent several impacts in his life.

"The first point of the star represents leaders—many of whom are here today," Smith said. "The second point on that star represents those NCOs and Soldiers who helped me to become the Soldier I have become," he added. He went on to indicate that "The third point on that star stands for community that helps and ambassadorship that supports. We all know it takes a village, but how many of us actually become a part of that village—to encourage, harass, and motivate people to make it to the next level? We all have a part to play—to develop not only our biological children, but also those children in our community." Continuing his description, Smith indicated that "The fourth point on that star is for friends. Next to your family, your friends help sustain you through all those many assignments and the hardships you endure." And finally, "The fifth and final point on the star is for family. There is no doubt that I would not be where I am today without support from a

great family. My mom is one of the most flexible and adaptive leaders I have ever known. My dad died when I was five; she could have packed it in, said life was too hard, and blamed the system. Instead, she made the strategic decision to send all of her children to private schools—before school vouchers," Smith said.

In closing, Brigadier General Smith said, "I pray that you glean that my message has little to do with me, but everything to do with how blessed we are and that one person can make a difference—be it that counselor in high school, the big brother or big sister mentor, or the uncle or aunt who makes the extra effort with a knucklehead kid."



Mr. Waack is the assistant editor of the Fort Leonard Wood Guidon.



Brigadier General Leslie C. Smith